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Mishna Berura
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סימן תרל"א סעיף ט'

Halacha Highlight

Transforming ceiling-boards into schach

Shulchan Aruch Siman 631 Seif 9
בית המקורה בנסרים
A house that is covered with boards

Shulchan Aruch discusses a case of a person with boards on a room that he would like to transform into a sukkah. Shulchan Aruch offers two methods to transform that room into a sukkah. The first method is to remove the nails that hold the boards in place and to shake all of the boards with the intent to use them as schach (מ"ב ס"ק כ"ד). The second option is to remove every other board and to replace it with valid schach. Once one takes either one of these two approaches the boards are considered valid schach even if they are wider than four tefachim. Although normally boards four tefachim wide are invalid for schach, in this case they are valid. The reason is that generally Chazal were afraid that if a person uses boards that are four tefachim wide or more it would lead people to mistakenly think that it is acceptable to use their house as a sukkah since the roof of their house is also made from boards that are four tefachim wide. In this circumstance, where the boards were already placed on the room to be part of the roof and he is performing an action to transform it into valid schach he demonstrates an awareness of the halachos involved and the Rabbinic restriction does not apply.

Shulchan Aruch cites Rambam who maintains that even when one removes the nails and shake all of the boards he may not use boards that are four tefachim wide as his schach. Biur Halacha (ד"ה שלא יהיו) references Magen Avrohom who explains that although the person who fixed the schach has demonstrated awareness of the necessary halachos those who see him sitting in a sukkah that utilizes four tefach boards as schach will not know what he did to make these boards usable and will think that it is permitted to sit in one's house as his sukkah.

Overview

Siman 631 Seif 9:

A house with boards on the roof that are not plastered (Meaning there is no mud or rocks normally placed there) **and one wants to make it valid for use as a sukkah it is sufficient to remove the nails for the sake of making it a sukkah or remove every other board and replace it with valid schach and the sukkah is valid even if the boards are four tefachim wide. There is an opinion that maintains that the boards may not be four tefachim wide.**

- Certainly if there was plaster on the boards and one removed the plaster and then moved the boards the sukkah would be valid. (M.B. 22)
- Although Rabbinically one would not be able to use these boards, l'chatchila, for schach so that one should not sit under his roof and think that it is a valid sukkah in this case since it was already a roof and he is taking steps to make it valid by removing the nails and moving each board for the sake of the mitzvah, the reason for the Rabbinic decree no longer applies. (M.B. 25)
- This opinion maintains that moving the boards is not sufficient if the boards are four tefachim wide. Whether one could replace every other board with valid schach if the boards are four tefachim wide is subject to debate. If the boards are not four tefachim wide and one replaces every other one with valid schach all opinions maintain that one may even sit beneath the boards. However, according to what was concluded in siman 629:18 that the custom is not to use boards for schach even if they are less than four tefachim wide one should avoid all of these cases unless it is a pressing circumstance. (M.B. 26)